



**THE TURNER REPORT**

## The beating and the blessing

Garth Turner  
Columnist

Well, this is a column I didn't want to write. In my decades on this planet I've been pushed around a few times. Taken some punches. But never been beaten, viciously, until one pleasant and warm Friday afternoon in the bucolic bosom of Old Town NOTL. "Oh my God, what's happening to you?" That was Amy, the nice lady at Cogeco who was helping me with a cable TV bill as I ambled down the shoulder of Centre Street, yakking with her on my phone speaker. An older VW drove towards me on the deserted street and stopped an inch from my knees. Out jumped a white-haired guy who rushed me, yelling, "Get off the effing street. Get on the effing sidewalk." Hang on, I said. I'm just on the phone. "Not any more," he shouted in an eruption of expletives. He knocked my phone from my hands, went to crush it with his foot and started pushing and punching. In the melee, I thought I heard my name. I fell

*Continued on Page 20*

# END OF ACT I

Final demolition marks start of new journey for Royal George Theatre



PHOTOGRAPH BY DAVE VAN DE LAAR

The curtain falls on the Royal George Theatre. As the final section of its landmark Queen Street facade comes down, a building woven into generations of Niagara-on-the-Lake memories takes its final bow. For decades, theatre-goers passed beneath the marquee, finding laughter, heartbreak, inspiration and escape beyond its doors. For countless residents and visitors, it was also a familiar landmark — as much a part of the town's identity as the Cenotaph clock tower. Now, the stage is cleared for a new beginning. While this beloved theatre exits after its final performance, a state-of-the-art, fully accessible replacement will soon rise in its place — proof that in theatre, as in life, every ending is simply the start of another act.

## Pilot error: Day 1 Air Canada bus leaves a little late after stop missed

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

As the FIFA World Cup crowds put new pressure on the drive to Toronto, Niagara travellers experienced a new way to start an Air Canada trip Monday: check in at the local airport, tag

their bags and board a bus to Pearson.

Air Canada Landline expanded to Niagara on June 15, giving passengers a way to start an Air Canada trip in Niagara-on-the-Lake before connecting through Toronto Pearson International Airport.

But not before a first-day wrinkle.

After picking up passengers at Niagara Falls Marriott on the Falls, the bus scheduled to leave NOTL at 11:20 a.m. mistakenly headed toward Pearson before returning to the airport

*Continued on Page 5*



Alina Niraula of Landline checks a traveller's boarding pass.



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# Developer's revised St. Davids townhouse plan rejected

Zahraa Hmood  
The Lake Report

The developer behind a new St. Davids subdivision came to town with a request to change its plans for a new block of townhouses and was met with disapproval from half of council, with questions about the proposal will impact St. Davids' already-strained stormwater system.

At Tuesday's general committee of the whole meeting, council voted against approving an amendment to a part of the Tawny Ridge Estates residential development, located north of Chestnut Avenue and south of Warner Road.

The developer is asking the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake to let it alter its plans for one block of the overall development. It wants to build 18 on-street townhouses on a one-acre plot of land next to Chestnut Avenue, instead of 20 block townhouses, which the town approved zoning for in March.

Town staff recommended council OK this zoning change, finding that the new plans are compat-



ible for the site and the surrounding area. However, council was split on its vote to approve staff's recommendation report, voting 4-4, meaning the zoning change wasn't approved.

William Heikoop, a planner with Upper Canada Consultants, spoke on behalf of the developer on Tuesday. He told council the Tawny Ridge team wants to change its plans so homebuyers can own the whole property (the unit and the land around it) rather than

buying a condo, which comes with monthly fees — fees they're finding people are less willing to pay at the moment.

"The market is down a little bit. Sales are not moving very quickly and those condominium fees are challenged when getting into that sales environment," he said. "The developer here is willing to drop a couple of units to come forward more with a more saleable, desirable product."

However, some of the councillors who voted

against the zoning change voiced concerns about whether the project's stormwater management plan is sufficient given that St. Davids is experiencing increased pressure on its system, which has led to flooding in people's homes and on their properties during heavy rainstorms.

"My concern is the challenge of stormwater in St. Davids," said Coun. Gary Burroughs. "As we try to resolve the issue, this space is yet another challenge."

A site plan shows the proposed redesign of one block within the Tawny Ridge Estates subdivision in St. Davids. The developer is seeking approval to replace 20 previously approved condominium townhouses with 18 freehold on-street townhouses, arguing the change would create a more marketable product while reducing lot coverage and increasing green space. Some councillors, however, raised concerns about how the revised development could affect St. Davids' ongoing stormwater challenges. SOURCED

The plan, Heikoop said, calls for the installation of a stormwater system with oversized pipes and an additional feature that'll slow down the flow of rainwater out of the pipes during the storm, holding water in the pipes.

However, Burroughs remained concerned about allowing the development forward without having solved the stormwater problem.

"We're about to spend a fortune trying to create additional ponds so that

we can deal with stormwater," he said. "Why is it that we're going to try and proceed with this when we haven't got the other built to handle it?"

Heikoop said no more water will come off from this site than what's flowing out today, explaining that its stormwater management plan is configured for a development with a lot coverage of 73 per cent, while the highest lot coverage on this block of land will be 57 per cent.

He added that this latest proposal will mitigate flooding in some ways, like having less non-porous land like concrete and asphalt and more natural land, which can absorb rainwater.

"We've gone above and beyond our requirements," he said.

While the developer didn't get the thumbs up it needs to move this part of the project forward, this isn't the end of the road — council will return to the staff report at its next meeting and decide to either reject the new plan or propose modifications that should be made.

[zahraa@niagaranow.com](mailto:zahraa@niagaranow.com)

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## Royal ride for cancer



Cyclists pedal through Niagara-on-the-Lake on the final stretch of the two-day Princess Margaret Ride to Conquer Cancer on Sunday. More than 4,000 riders took part in the annual fundraiser, travelling more than 200 kilometres from the Toronto area to NOTL while raising millions of dollars for cancer research and patient care through the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre. The event, one of Canada's largest cycling fundraisers, finished at Peller Estates and drew participants from across the country, including many cancer survivors riding with yellow flags attached to their bikes.

DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## NOTL may cut development charges to unlock \$3 million provincial grant

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake is trying to win about \$3 million in infrastructure funding by signalling it may cut the fees it charges on new homes.

But councillors first wanted to know one thing: if the province says no, is the town still stuck giving developers a break?

Councillors voted 5-3 Tuesday to let staff apply to Ontario's Development Charge Reduction Program, ahead of the June 19 deadline.

The program offers municipalities up to 90 per cent funding for eligible projects to support housing. In return, municipalities must commit to reducing residential development charges by 30 to 50 per cent, or more, for at least three years.

Development charges are fees tied to new construction. Any cut would apply only to residential development charges, not commercial ones.

The vote only allows staff to apply for funding before the deadline. Before the town commits to any lost development charge revenue, the matter would have to return to council through the annual budget process or a future report.



Treasurer Kyle Freeborn said residential development charges are already relatively low in NOTL, at about \$17,000 per unit, compared with Fort Erie, which he said is about \$75,000 per unit.

The amount the town makes in development charges varies annually, but in 2025, it collected about \$312,000 from residential development, he said.

So councillors asked: if the town already charges less than others, does cutting development charges further make sense?

Staff say yes, Freeborn said.

"At first glance, we did not think we were eligible," he said. "We are coming to a point where we do believe we may be eligible."

The town is applying for 90 per cent funding on

about \$3.4 million in project costs, equalling around \$3.06 million.

Freeborn said preliminary calculations show a 30 per cent reduction would mean about \$180,000 a year in lost revenue, or \$540,000 over three years.

A 50 per cent reduction would mean about \$300,000 a year, or \$900,000 over three years.

So either way, the town would come out ahead on paper.

Coun. Erwin Wiens pressed Freeborn on whether the town would still have to give up development charge revenue if the grant money did not come through.

"So what happens if we don't get the grant?" he asked.

Wiens pushed further: "The province denies us,

Treasurer Kyle Freeborn explains Niagara-on-the-Lake's application to the province's Development Charge Reduction Program during Tuesday's committee of the whole meeting. Council voted 5-3 to allow staff to apply for up to \$3 million in infrastructure funding, though any future reduction in residential development charges would still require council approval through a future budget or staff report.

PAIGE SEBURN

are we out 50 per cent of the (development charges)?"

Freeborn said no.

"If we do not get those funds, we should not reduce (development charges)," he said, later adding "that's correct" when Wiens clarified once more the town would not be obligated to move ahead with cuts without the grant.

Coun. Gary Burroughs questioned whether the town could lose more than it gains if a lot of housing is built during the three-year reduction.

But Freeborn said based on the above calculations and historic averages, staff believe the funding would outweigh the lost revenue.

The final application to the province will be circulated to council for information once completed.

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# Stars spotted filming downtown



Phoebe Dynevor and Patrick Schwarzenegger film a scene on Queen Street as they stroll past Nina Gelateria and Olde Tyme Candy Shoppe, ice cream cones in hand. Schwarzenegger appeared to be particularly enjoying the frozen treat, drawing a few laughs from amused onlookers gathered nearby. The production occupied part of the street during filming, though vehicle access remained open throughout the shoot. RICHARD HARLEY

**PHOTO GALLERY**  
See more pictures at [niagaranow.com](http://niagaranow.com)

## Hollywood moved in next door. NOTLer says it's been fascinating

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Melanie Farquhar had barely moved into 129 Johnson St. before Hollywood needed part of the property.

The new Niagara-on-the-Lake resident bought the Old Town home in November, spent months renovating it and finally moved in about a week ago.

Now, portable toilets are on the property. A generator is using part of the driveway. And outside her new home, a 20th Century Studios romantic comedy has turned a quiet Johnson Street stretch into a working film set.

"Actually, it was kind of fun watching," Farquhar said.

The production is for the film adaptation of "Beach Read," Emily Henry's 2020 romance novel, which is being filmed in NOTL under the working title "Happily Ever After."

The film stars Phoebe Dynevor and Patrick Schwarzenegger and is expected to be released next year by 20th Century Studios, which is owned by the Walt Disney Company.

Farquhar said the crew came for the movie, but fell for NOTL.

"They all love the town," she said. "Everyone's been crazy over it."

Farquhar agreed to let the production use part of the property, including space for portable toilets and part of the driveway for a generator.

"Probably for a couple months now, they've been sending newsletters and coming by and talking to us," she said.

So far, the experience has been positive, she added.

"We really look forward to seeing this movie."

Farquhar declined to discuss any financial details of the agreement but said the production is using other homes nearby and sought permission to use part of her property.

"They had to ask us permission if we were fine with this," she said. "They took insurance and stuff."

That kind of setup could feel like an intrusion for some homeowners, but Farquhar said it has felt more like a front-row seat to something special.

"It was interesting to see how it works, how many people are involved," she



Melanie Farquhar stands beside her Johnson Street home, where support equipment for the filming of the Hollywood adaptation of "Beach Read," including the blue screen visible in the background, has become part of the view outside her door. PAIGE SEBURN

said, adding there's "a lot of logistics."

"There's a lot of people here in the evening," she said.

"They really don't start up until about 4 o'clock, 5 o'clock, and they go pretty late."

But from inside, she said, the disruption has been limited.

"I mean, really, you don't hear it from inside."

Farquhar said getting in and out of the house has also not been a problem.

"Oh yeah," she said, when asked if leaving home and driving around had been manageable.

And the crew, she said, has been welcoming and courteous throughout the production.

"They're super, super friendly."

At one point, crew members even offered to take leftover garbage, she said.

Farquhar has only lived in the home for about a week, but already knows

the neighbours from going back and forth during renovations. The production has turned into a neighbourhood curiosity, she said.

"We all knew about it."

Farquhar said the mood on the street has been friendly, with one neighbour bringing Tim Hortons donuts for the crew.

"A lot of them are elderly," Farquhar said of nearby neighbours. "They come out and watch and

everyone (in production) talks with them."

"They've been very easy to have around," she added. "They're very clean."

The production has also drawn people who are not part of the neighbourhood.

Farquhar said a few women from Newfoundland came by while she was walking close by, hoping to spot some of the actors.

"They were like, 'We came around, we're looking for stars,'" she said. "And she said, 'Oh my gosh, we're in love with Niagara-on-the-Lake.'"

Filming in Old Town began last week and is expected to continue into mid-to-late June.

The production has already changed the rhythm in parts of NOTL, including at the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 124 on King Street, where TCST Productions is using a significant portion of the parking lot from June 9 to June 20 for transportation vehicles and trucks.

Parks Canada has also agreed to provide additional parking at Fort George National Historic Site, while keeping the site open to visitors.

[paigeseburn@niagaranow.com](mailto:paigeseburn@niagaranow.com)

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# Air Canada lands in NOTL, by bus

Continued from Front Page

for its pickup. Travellers boarded around 12:05 p.m., about 45 minutes behind schedule, and left shortly after.

But there was no scramble inside the terminal. Landline and airport staff kept passengers updated and the schedule had extra time built in before flights.

Mary Young, of Fort Erie, used the service Monday on her way to Victoria, B.C.

She said leaving from NOTL made the trip easier, especially with road work and traffic making the drive to Toronto less appealing.

"I didn't want my husband having to drive into the city," she said. "Especially with the World Cup on right now."

Air Canada has its own office space in the terminal, its own IT system connected to the airline's network and its own access to the building, meaning Air Canada staff can come in without airport staff having to be there.

The airport, YCM, has also been working on practical upgrades, including signs, parking, benches and other passenger amenities, said Dan Pilon, the airport's chief executive officer.

He said about five passengers took the first bus and that the route will need time to grow.

"The challenge is getting the rest of the world to know how to book through Niagara."

Pilon said that means marketing the "how" — showing travellers that Niagara can be booked through Air Canada as the start or end point of a trip, with the bus acting as the connection to Pearson.

"There's no magic pill," he said. "Following what's happened in other locations, it takes time to build."

There is currently no charge to park at the airport and no time limit, Pilon said. Landline's website tells passengers they can park free for up to two weeks.

Jacques Thibodeaux, Landline's director for Canada, said Niagara was one of three Ontario markets launching Monday, along with Muskoka and Sarnia.



Alina Niraula of Landline checks a traveller's boarding pass. It was the second bus ever to leave the Niagara District Airport for Toronto Pearson International Airport on Monday. The route is so new, the bus driver forgot to stop, causing a short delay. PAIGE SEBURN

They join existing Air Canada Landline routes in Hamilton, Kitchener and Kingston.

"Effectively, this represents a doubling of our service today," he said in an interview.

The Niagara service is starting with support from the three municipalities that own the airport.

To help the service get started, the Town of NOTL, the City of Niagara Falls and the City of St. Catharines each committed up to \$125,000 from municipal accommodation tax funds to create a \$375,000 revenue guarantee.

The money is not an upfront payment to Air Canada or Landline and is only drawn if ridership falls short.

Other municipalities are taking different approaches to supporting it.

The City of Kingston told The Lake Report it has a commercial agreement with Landline for a revenue guarantee, funded by its municipal accommodation tax up to \$200,000 plus marketing support.

The city said the service began in September 2025 and has used the guarantee, but ridership has been trending positively month over month. As of May 1, Kingston's service doubled from two daily trips to four.

In Sarnia, the new service is a one-year pilot between Air Canada, Landline and the city.

Sarnia committed a minimum revenue guarantee of \$375,000, with half from budgeted airport business development money and half from a partnership with the local destination marketing organization. The city said no funds were drawn before the June 15 launch.

Hamilton International Airport said it has not provided any type of revenue guarantee to Air Canada or Landline. The twin cities of Kitchener-Waterloo also haven't provided a revenue guarantee.

Muskoka did not respond to questions about whether they have financial arrangements tied to the service by press time.

The new Niagara service has created three customer-service agent positions and four bus-driver roles for Air Canada and Landline.

Lezlie Harper, of Niagara Bound Tours, told The Lake Report she is pleased to see the initiative and hopes it helps her business.

"As a tour operator and receptive here in Niagara, I am delighted."

However, she said, the region still has to deal with the next step: how visitors move around once they get here.

"Once visitors get off the bus, how do they get to other areas of the region?" Harper wrote in an email.

"The regional and local political and tourism leaders need to address this."

She said Niagara needs to put more focus on helping visitors understand how to get here from Pearson or Buffalo airport.

"We have not done a good job with that so far."

Harper said she expects local transportation companies will play a role, but she does not know yet how it will work.

"I am assuming there will be many of our transportation companies that will be providing transportation."

"I just hope that people don't get too greedy — where everyone wants a piece of that action — so that our visitors are left spinning, due to dizzy costs," she said.

Pilon said options such as Uber are generally close by and the airport is also working with local transportation company Zoom Zoom.

"You're going to get somebody within less than five minutes from here," he said.

To mark the launch, the airport prepared welcome bags with local items for the first 100 passengers using the Niagara service, whether arriving or departing.

The service will run seven days a week, with departures from the airport scheduled for 5:30 a.m., 11:20 a.m. and 4:05 p.m.

Each airport departure also has a pickup at Marriott on the Falls 40 minutes earlier.

paigeseburn@niagaranow.com



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# Snowbirds fly one more time over Niagara



The Canadian Forces Snowbirds fly over Niagara-on-the-Lake Wednesday afternoon. The nine-jet Royal Canadian Air Force demonstration team was in southern Ontario as part of a visit to the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton, drawing eyes skyward across the region. The nine-jet demonstration team was joined by a historic B-25 Mitchell, during a special aerial salute ahead of upcoming airshow appearances in the United States. Residents across Niagara paused to watch the iconic red-and-white CT-114 Tutor jets carve their signature formations overhead.  
DAVE VAN DE LAAR

## Tax, utility hikes eyed to close NOTL's \$13M infrastructure gap

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake is spending about \$13 million less each year than staff say it needs to keep its infrastructure in shape.

Now, council has backed staff's recommended long-term funding targets, which would mean tax and rate increases over the next five to 20 years in an effort to close that gap.

The vote Tuesday night does not lock in those tax hikes just yet, nor does it approve the final asset management plan. It selects the levels of service for roads, stormwater, water and wastewater — some of the town's highest-risk, highest-impact infrastructure systems that were identified through council, staff and resident feedback.

The approval of staff's recommendation still needs formal adoption at the June 23 council meeting.

The final plan was originally expected in November, but treasurer Kyle Freeborn said it's ahead of schedule and could return to council for approval as early as September or October, now that this phase is approved.

Most town assets might still be in decent shape — with 79 per cent rated fair or better — but the town needs about \$22.27 million a year

in capital investment to maintain municipal assets.

It has about \$9.19 million in sustainable funding, leaving an annual infrastructure gap of about \$13.08 million.

Marisa Banuelos-Spencer, an asset management adviser with PSD Citywide, told council the town looked at three options: keep current funding, fund as much as it can or take a middle-ground approach.

While staying at current funding levels could worsen asset conditions and raise risk, backlogged work and service disruptions, Banuelos-Spencer said, full "optimal funding" would come at the highest cost to taxpayers and ratepayers. It would, however, bring the best long-term results.

Staff recommended a hybrid approach, which council ultimately backed.

The approach puts tax-funded assets on the middle-ground track, moving toward 70 per cent of ideal funding over 20 years. That would mean an estimated 1.5 per cent annual increase on the tax levy, not including inflation.

Stormwater would be funded more aggressively. Staff recommended reaching 100 per cent of optimal stormwater funding over 20 years, which would mean an estimated 4.3 per cent annual increase on the stormwater levy.

Water and wastewater

would also move to 100 per cent of optimal funding, but over five years. That would mean estimated annual increases of 1.9 per cent for water and 0.6 per cent for wastewater.

Banuelos-Spencer said the town will be able to review its progress annually and adjust the target, but that would also affect its ability to reach the service levels being set now.

"Approval of this plan is not binding the town to, for example, budgetary decisions," she said.

Coun. Erwin Wiens said the town must focus on fixing the infrastructure it already has before committing to new projects, something he said town staff has brought to his attention.

"I've heard for the last eight years," he said, "we're not funding the buildings we have, before we build new buildings."

"We have to remember that the next time someone says, 'Let's build something for the good of the community,'" Wiens said. "How are we going to fund it?"

Coun. Sandra O'Connor pushed for a note about green infrastructure and natural assets, saying that part of the regulation was not reflected in the recommendation before council.

"(The staff report) says, 'Consistent with the requirements of Ontario regulation,'" said O'Connor.



Marisa Banuelos-Spencer presents the hard math behind Niagara-on-the-Lake's infrastructure problem Tuesday night, as councillors backed funding targets tied to tax and rate increases over the next 20 years. PAIGE SEBURN

"It's not entirely consistent, because the regulation talks about green infrastructure."

Freeborn said green assets are not included in the recommendation report but that work is being handled separately and will be included in the complete plan.

O'Connor tried to add a separate item making clear that staff still have to complete the green infrastructure portion, but the amendment did not get a second.

Coun. Andrew Niven questioned whether mu-

nicipal accommodation tax money could be used to help reduce pressure on the general levy.

Staff's report says municipal accommodation tax money could be explored as a way to help pay for infrastructure, especially because tourism puts pressure on town assets.

"I thought we had an approved framework that would guide how the money is spent," said Niven.

There is a draft framework, Freeborn said, but staff want to revisit it in light of asset management.

Wiens linked the infrastructure funding gap partly to past councils not keeping up with capital spending.

"It started in 1995," he said, "when the province started sending less and less money to the municipalities."

"Councils chose not to support capital infrastructure spending."

He said that's why the town "better buckle up for the next budget."

"We gotta fix our roads, our infrastructure, our culverts, our ditching, all of that stuff," said Wiens.

But Coun. Gary Burroughs said the issue is bigger than NOTL's budget choices.

"We have a habit on this council of blaming everything that's wrong on past councils."

He said municipalities have been handed more responsibilities, but not the funding that used to come with them.

"The funding that we used to receive from both the provincial and federal governments has dried up and the downloading of more requirements has increased — without funding," he said.

Wiens said his point was not to assign blame.

"Every decision we make, it doesn't work in a silo. It works in conjunction with everything else," he said.

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- *Richard Harley, publisher*

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The  
**Lake Report**

# NOTLer leads Pathstone campaign for kids' mental health

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

The agency that helps Niagara young people struggling with mental health problems has launched a major new campaign to pay off the mortgage on its headquarters and free up millions of dollars to treat kids at the grassroots level.

Pathstone Mental Health aims to raise more than \$1 million over the next 14 months to retire its mortgage and direct more money to where it can do more good for kids, says Niagara-on-the-Lake resident Ginny Medland Green, who is chairing the Clearing the Path campaign.

With innovative walk-in clinics, plus other vital services across Niagara, and its massive Branscombe Mental Health Centre near the Marotta Family Hospital in St. Catharines, Pathstone is the region's "go-to place for kids" with mental health issues, says CEO Shaun Baylis.

And more than 5,000 children a year — a total that keeps growing — rely on Pathstone, he told the campaign's kick-off at a reception in NOTL last week.

The growth in demand is one reason why the agency's new fundraising drive is so crucial, he said.

Nine months ago, the Branscombe Centre building's mortgage sat at \$3.7



**PHOTO GALLERY**  
See more pictures at [niagaranow.com](http://niagaranow.com)



Left: NOTL resident Ginny Medland Green is chair of Pathstone's campaign to pay off the mortgage on the agency's headquarters and instead free up millions to help treat children. NICOLE STARK Right: Dr. Richa Agnihotri, shown with her daughter Ava, says prevention is key to treating children's mental health problems. SUPPLIED

million and Pathstone was staring down another eight or more years of loan payments.

But \$2.5 million in donations quietly contributed by three individuals gave the campaign a huge headstart and the outstanding total is down to \$1.2 million.

Medland Green and

another anonymous donor together pledged a total of \$1.5 million, and then last month Tom Kevill of St. Catharines stepped forward with more than \$1 million for the cause.

Thanks to contributions like those, looking ahead, "the path is clearing," Green said.

Without a mortgage, Pathstone could have upward of another \$500,000 a year at its disposal for programs to help kids, she noted.

Dr. Richa Agnihotri, a community pediatrician who works extensively with Pathstone, says helping Niagara's children, youth and teens deal with mental health

crises requires money, time and a sound strategy.

"Mental health cannot be viewed in isolation," she told the audience of about 70 donors and would-be contributors who attended the launch at the Niagara Parkway home of Ann-Louise Branscombe.

"A child's mental well-

being is influenced by many factors, including physical health, sleep, nutrition, family relationships, school experiences, social connections and the environment in which they live," Agnihotri said.

"When a child struggles, there is rarely a single cause. Because of that, there is rarely a single solution."

Medication can help some children, but it's also important to intervene early and help them before problems become too severe, Agnihotri said.

That philosophy led to the creation of Pathstone's Pediatric Wellness Clinic, which takes "a comprehensive approach to understanding the whole child," she said.

"Rather than focusing solely on symptoms, we examine the factors influencing well-being and work collaboratively with families to identify practical strategies that promote resilience, healthy development and long-term wellness."

She embraces this approach because it focuses on prevention.

"By identifying concerns early, we can often change the trajectory of a child's mental health journey — and lifelong health and well-being," Agnihotri said.

"When we help a child early, the impact can last a lifetime."

For more information, go to [pathstonementalhealth.ca](http://pathstonementalhealth.ca).

# Pathstone program 'a godsend' for bullied child, family says

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

For Mary, having access to Pathstone Mental Health's services has been a life-changing experience.

It's been a tough few years for Mary, who is now 16. She's dealt with unimaginable grief, depression, anxiety and bullying at the hands of classmates.

Plus she lived through a pandemic that inspired societal changes no one ever foresaw.

Today, she is doing much better, thanks to Pathstone and a program her grandmother says has been "a godsend."

Mary isn't her real name because, unfortunately, society's stigma when it comes to mental illness can be as debilitating as the illness itself.

Eight years ago, Mary's father died by suicide, plunging her family into a crisis of grief that few can appreciate.

Mary's grandmother,

we'll call her Anne, lives in Niagara-on-the-Lake, so Mary and her mom moved to St. Catharines from the Toronto area to be close to family for support and help.

**"Now, she's getting her credits. She feels better about herself and I think it's all because she feels safe."**

**"ANNE"  
GRANDMOTHER  
OF PATHSTONE PATIENT**

Mary was "always full of fun but her father's death really knocked the stuffing out of her," Anne says. "It was very, very hard for her."

As the new kid at her elementary school in St. Catharines, Mary tried to fit in, all while privately dealing with the grief of losing a parent.

Her doctor arranged coun-

selling, which helped a lot, Anne says.

But before long, problems started at school, starting with verbal abuse by two other girls from her Grade 4 class. Mary tried to ignore it and walk away, but then it grew into punching, kicking and hair-pulling assaults.

School officials and the police all said there was nothing they could do.

The principal worried the aggressors themselves were perhaps dealing with trouble at home; the police said it was a problem for the school to handle. The assailants were told to stop; they didn't.

Eventually, the COVID pandemic hit and learning moved to online-only. But, for Mary, the damage was done. And like many of her generation, growing up amid COVID only exacerbated problems.

Fast-forward a few years, she entered high school, still scarred and traumatized after the bullying during

her formative years. Still in need of help.

Then the family heard about a special Pathstone school program with only six students in a classroom, plus a teacher and a counsellor.

Mary applied and her family thought she was on a wait list, Anne says, but somehow she fell through the cracks for nearly two years.

This past January that all changed. Mary got in, embraced the program and is "doing so much better."

"The psychologist at the school, and the teacher, both told her that she would be safe there. Because she didn't want to go to school," Anne says.

Now, she's learning, engaged, making friends, showing progress, dealing with the world around her.

"Pathstone was like a godsend for her. Now, she's getting her credits. She feels better about herself and I think it's all because



Pathstone treats more than 5,000 children from across Niagara, including NOTL, every year. NICOLE STARK

she feels safe," she says.

The family is starting to again see the child they once knew. "She's starting to get back to being herself," Anne says.

"She so needs to be where

she is right now and we're so thankful to Pathstone for this opportunity to get her on an even keel and to give her some of the coping skills she needs."

[kevin@niagaranow.com](mailto:kevin@niagaranow.com)

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# Polish soldiers remembered



Members of Polish veterans' organizations, historical military groups and community leaders gather at the Haller Army Cemetery at St. Vincent de Paul Church on Sunday during Niagara-on-the-Lake's annual Polish Pilgrimage. The ceremony honours the Polish volunteers who trained at Camp Kościuszko in Niagara-on-the-Lake during the First World War and the 41 soldiers who died during the 1918 influenza pandemic while preparing to fight for an independent Poland. IAN MATHER



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# Chautauqua is Neighbourhood of the Year

Staff  
The Lake Report

There are many neighbourhoods in the town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, but only one has been named the top neighbourhood in the community this year.

Old Town's Chautauqua is the winner of the Town of NOTL's Neighbourhood of the Year contest and will host a neighbourhood party supported by the municipality on Saturday afternoon, July 11 in recognition of its win.

Over the past two weeks, residents of neighbourhoods across town were invited to nominate their neighbourhood for the award online sharing what makes where they live special, and encouraged to upload photos or videos highlighting their neighbourhood's spirit and sense of connection.

On Tuesday, the Chautauqua Residents Association said its neighbourhood won.

"This recognition celebrates the outstanding



Residents of Chautauqua gather for a community photo at Ryerson Park. Chautauqua was recently named the town's 2026 Neighbourhood of the Year, recognized for its strong sense of community, volunteerism and resident engagement. FILE/DAVE VAN DE LAAR

community spirit, volunteerism, neighbourly support and sense of belonging that make Chautauqua such a special place to live," said Weston Miller, president of the residents association, in a written statement.

"I want to sincerely thank everyone who helps make our neighbourhood so vibrant and connected, whether by volunteering, attending events, supporting neighbours, opening your gardens, sharing ideas or

simply contributing to the warm and welcoming spirit of our community."

The origins of this neighbourhood, located in the northwest end of Old Town next to Lake Ontario, date back to the late 19th century. It was established as part of the Chautauqua movement, a semi-religious social and cultural phenomenon popular in North America at the time.

The area was to be a getaway spot for people in

the summertime while also offering intellectual and physical development. It's noted for its historic architecture and unique "hub and spoke" layout.

Residents in Chautauqua will receive a neighbourhood party package with light snacks and refreshments on July 11 from 1 to 4 p.m. in Chautauqua Park. The town will also provide its Play in the Park trailer, which offers recreational activities for residents to enjoy.



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## \$150K gift will help Pleasant Manor's next big plan

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Pleasant Manor's next transformation just got a six-figure push from the community.

Two donations totalling \$150,000 were presented Friday afternoon for Radiant Care's planned intergenerational community hub and fitness and wellness centre in Virgil.

The project will turn 25,000 square feet of the former long-term care home at Pleasant Manor into a shared space for seniors, students, children and the wider community.

A \$100,000 personal memorial donation and a \$50,000 donation from the Virgil Business Association were presented at the old long-term care home building at 1743 Four Mile Creek Rd.

The larger donation was made through Woodwinds, the family foundation of Catherine Novick, Leslie Ray and Dylan Larkin, in memory of Gordon Edwin Powers Ray. The money will support the broader redevelopment.

Novick said her husband lived for years with a debilitating chronic neurological condition. While the family was able to get care at home for a time, she said Niagara-on-the-Lake did not have enough residential care when they needed it.

That meant making the difficult decision to temporarily move him to Royal Henley Retirement Community in St. Catharines.

"We've lived the experience," Novick said.

She said her husband died Dec. 6, just as he was being offered a place in Pleasant Manor's long-term care home.

"We've lived in Niagara-on-the-Lake for 16 years now," she said. "It would have been wonderful to have him closer, but that's just the way life goes."

For Novick, the donation is meant to help more people find care and support closer to home.

"Knowing that support is close by, when needed, is very necessary and reassuring, for both those in need and for their caregivers," she said.

The Virgil Business Association's \$50,000 donation



Members of the Virgil Business Association present a \$50,000 donation to the Radiant Care Foundation on Friday at Pleasant Manor in Virgil. The contribution will help fund fitness and wellness equipment for Radiant Care's planned intergenerational community hub project.

is earmarked for fitness and wellness equipment, including elliptical machines, rowing machines, spin machines and passive exercise equipment.

Richard Wall, speaking for the association, said the group has a long history with both Virgil and Pleasant Manor.

The association previously helped fund amenities at Pleasant Manor, including a hot tub in 1983 and five-pin bowling alleys in 1994. Wall said he believes the new hub could become something other communities look to.

"My hope is that we become the shining star, and hopefully maybe some of the other communities like ours, across Ontario, maybe across Canada, might follow our lead," he said.

Radiant Care chief executive officer Tim Siemens said the donations show the project is already drawing support from beyond Pleasant Manor.

"It's exciting that the community is rallying around a project that many people in the Niagara-on-the-Lake community will benefit from, particularly

our community of senior citizens," Siemens said.

The redevelopment is planned for the old long-term care home on the Pleasant Manor property, not the new long-term care building that opened nearby in December.

Siemens said the 25,000-square-foot space will be retrofitted to include a fitness and wellness centre and a "living classroom" for Niagara College students.

The college is expected to bring its first group of 20 personal support worker students to the site in September, Siemens said.

The lower level of the building is also planned to become a daycare with space for up to 96 children.

That mix is at the heart of the intergenerational vision: children in daycare, students training for health-care work and seniors living above the space.

While the former long-term care portion of the building is being redeveloped, Siemens said there are still seniors living independently on the second floor in 18 apartment-style life lease units.

[paigeseburn@niagaranow.com](mailto:paigeseburn@niagaranow.com)

## Pleasant Manor brings back Community Day on June 20

Staff  
The Lake Report

Pleasant Manor is bringing back a familiar community tradition this weekend.

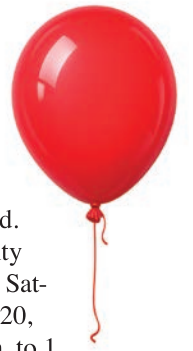
Community Day returns Saturday, June 20, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., marking the first time the annual event has been held since the pandemic.

The day will include vintage vehicles, homesteading activities, bouncy castles for children, food and live music by the Marty Allen Band.

Residents, tenants, their families and the wider community have been invited to take part. Admission is free.

A welcome is planned for 11 a.m.

The event, formerly known as Farm Day, will be held in the parking lot behind the long-term care building at Pleasant Manor.



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SPONSORED  
The Lake Report

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Situated at 60 Bathurst St. in the heart of King West, this residence captures the essence of contemporary living while maintaining an industrial aesthetic

areas to create an inviting atmosphere. The modern kitchen offers sleek finishes and generous workspace, while the spacious bedroom provides a peaceful retreat from the energy of the city. A versatile den adds exceptional flexibility, making it ideal as a home office, creative studio, or guest space.

Beyond the suite itself, residents enjoy the boutique lifestyle that has made Sixty Lofts one of King

West's most recognizable addresses.

Known for its industrial-inspired architecture and intimate community atmosphere, the building offers a distinctive blend of character and exclusivity.

Location is another defining advantage. Positioned just south of King Street West, the residence places renowned restaurants, cafés, boutique shopping, fitness studios, and entertainment venues just steps away.

Excellent transit options and quick access to the Gardiner Expressway make commuting throughout the city both convenient and efficient.

Adding to its appeal, the suite includes a privately owned underground parking space equipped with an electric vehicle charging station, as well as a separately owned storage locker—valuable features that enhance both convenience and long-term functionality. For buyers seeking a truly turnkey

experience, the residence is also available fully furnished for an additional cost, offering a sophisticated, designer-curated living space ready to enjoy from day one.

For those seeking more than simply a condominium, Suite 403 represents an opportunity to own a home with enduring architectural appeal in one of Toronto's most established loft communities. Combining timeless industrial design with modern functionality and an

unbeatable location, it embodies the lifestyle that continues to define King West as one of Canada's premier urban neighbourhoods.

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# NOTL tells region its road needs are **larger than they seem on paper**

Paige Seburn  
Local Journalism Initiative  
The Lake Report

Niagara-on-the-Lake might be small on paper, but its transportation needs are not.

That was the message councillors pressed on Niagara Region staff Tuesday, as a transportation update sparked discussion about tourism traffic, summer road work, cycling, walkability and whether the town is being heard.

Regional staff were at NOTL's committee of the whole meeting to present an update on the Niagara Transportation Plan 2051, a strategy that will guide future decisions on roads, transit, cycling, walking and goods movement.

The plan remains in its early stages. Staff are identifying pressure points across the transportation network before deciding which projects should move forward and when.

Coun. Wendy Cheropita said NOTL's transportation

needs cannot be measured solely by population.

"We have much bigger needs than the size of our municipality," she said.

"Yet, I don't see any indication that the servicing in our community addresses that."

Jill Stephen, the region's associate director of infrastructure planning, said the region is including a tourism scenario in its modelling.

The study will look beyond normal weekday travel patterns to examine how visitors travel to destinations such as NOTL and move around the region once they arrive.

Coun. Gary Burroughs questioned how much influence the town has when regional projects affect local traffic, describing the relationship as appearing "top-down."

He pointed to road work planned for Niagara Stone Road during the summer tourism season.

"As a tourist area, that's the worst time that we could

possibly be doing (that)," Burroughs said.

Frank Tassone, the region's director of transportation services, said construction schedules are co-ordinated with municipalities, but some projects must take place during favourable weather.

"It's unfortunate, but it's the truth that transportation projects do cause some level of disruption," he said.

Burroughs also raised concerns about the Airport Road and Niagara Stone Road intersection, saying traffic already backs up during peak tourism periods.

Tassone said the region has paused decisions about the intersection while awaiting details on the Niagara District Airport's planned expansion.

"We have put a pause on making any decisions at that particular intersection, until we see exactly what the plans are for the airport," he said.

Coun. Sandra O'Connor shifted the discussion to consultation, citing council's

opposition to the St. Davids roundabout project.

"Yet, we received no feedback," O'Connor said. "So, I'm not too sure what the purpose of this kind of consultation is."

Tassone said the region responded by committing to a safety audit and a roundabout education program.

O'Connor said her concern extended beyond that specific project.

"My point is about consultation and it seems to me as if we are not being heard when we do put forward ideas," she said.

The discussion later turned to sidewalks, bike lanes and multi-use paths.

Coun. Erwin Wiens asked how walkability would be incorporated into regional road planning in NOTL.

Tassone said pedestrian facilities are generally the responsibility of local municipalities, prompting questions about who pays for active transportation infrastructure on regional roads.

Coun. Maria Mavridis



Frank Tassone, Niagara Region's director of transportation services, and Jill Stephen, associate director of infrastructure planning, present an update on the Niagara Transportation Plan 2051 during Tuesday's committee of the whole meeting. Councillors used the discussion to raise concerns about tourism traffic, road construction, cycling infrastructure and whether NOTL's transportation needs are being adequately reflected in regional planning.

asked whether bike lanes are treated the same way as sidewalks.

Stephen said cycling facilities within the road corridor are generally the responsibility of the road authority, while facilities outside the curb typically fall to municipalities.

Tassone said multi-use paths remain a grey area because they are not specifically addressed in provincial legislation.

Coun. Andrew Niven said NOTL's transportation needs differ from other municipalities because of its

tourism industry, heritage character, agricultural economy and seasonal traffic patterns.

"We are unique," he said. "That would be my only assurance: that we remain unique."

The region will continue consulting local councils and reviewing public feedback before moving into the next phase of the project in late 2026 and early 2027.

A final transportation plan and 10-year implementation strategy are expected by the end of 2027.

[paigeseburn@niagaranow.com](mailto:paigeseburn@niagaranow.com)

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# Revel in the absurd delights of 'Jeeves & Wooster'

**JEEVES & WOOSTER  
IN PERFECT  
NONSENSE**  
\*\*\*\*\*  
(out of five)

*Court House Theatre, 1 hour, 55 minutes, one intermission. Ends Oct. 10. A play from the works of P.G. Wodehouse. By Robert Goodale and David Goodale. Directed by Brendan McMurtry-Howlett.*

Penny-Lynn Cookson  
Special to The Lake Report

As I lay in my bath, soaping a meditative foot and exercising the old cerebellum to write this review, I stopped. One simply cannot emulate the gifts of the greatest prose writer of the 20th century, P.G. Wodehouse. Best simply to quote Wodehouse in the voice of his Bertie Wooster character as he ponders the craft of writing in "Right Ho, Jeeves":

"I don't know if you have had the same experience, but the snag I always come

up against when I'm telling a story is this dashed difficult problem of where to begin it. It's a thing you don't want to go wrong over, because one false step and you're sunk. I mean, if you fool about too long at the start, trying to establish atmosphere, as they call it, and all that sort of rot, you fail to grip and the customers walk out on you.

"Get off the mark, on the other hand, like a scalded cat, and your public is at a loss. It simply raises its eyebrows, and can't make out what you're talking about."

There is no chance of that with this superb production and Canadian premiere of "Jeeves & Wooster in Perfect Nonsense," written by the Goodale brothers and adapted primarily from Wodehouse's "The Code of the Woosters."

Damien Atkins as Jeeves, Jeff Irving as Bertie Wooster and Travis Seetoo as Seppings are pure delight. The non-stop action, multiple character switches, brilliant language, unexpected plot dynamics and



Jeff Irving as Bertie Wooster and Damien Atkins as Jeeves in "Jeeves & Wooster in Perfect Nonsense." Penny-Lynn Cookson gives the show a glowing five stars. MICHAEL COOPER

changing sets and costumes are performed with great elan and sheer ingenuity.

Bertie Wooster is an idle, wealthy, upper-class scatterbrain who means well but is always getting into predicaments and scrapes. All solutions depend on his intelligent, knowledgeable and tactful valet, the gentleman's gentleman, Jeeves.

Wooster's Aunt Dahlia

orders him to steal a silver cow-creamer coveted by her silver collecting husband, Tom Travers. If cheerful, Tom will likely give her the money to underwrite her magazine "Milady's Boudoir." Bertie resists as the cow-creamer is now in the possession of an arch-rival collector, Sir Watkyn Bassett, CBE.

As Wooster appeared

before the formidable Magistrate Bassett after a night in jail for pinching a policeman's helmet, he has no desire to be hovering about Bassett's lair, Tottleigh Towers. Also present will be Roderick Spode, the terrifying seven-foot-tall, fascist leader of the Black Shorts who already suspects Wooster as a thief.

Bassett's loopy daughter,

Madeline, is engaged to Wooster's pal, the reclusive Gussie Fink-Nottle, whose obsession is the love life of newts at full moon. Bassett disapproves. Gussie writes harsh critical comments of Bassett in a brown notebook — which he loses. If found, end of engagement.

Enter Bassett's niece, Stephanie "Stiffy" Byng with attack dog Bartholomew. She needs her uncle's permission to marry the local curate and Wooster chum, Harold "Stinker" Pinker. Bassett again disapproves. Mayhem ensues.

Kudos for the sets and costumes designed by Sim Suzer, lighting designed by Kaileigh Krysztofiak, sound by Olivia Wheeler and movement direction by Matt Alfano. We were gifted with laughter, anticipation and Wodehouse magic, plus some terrific Gene-Kelly-inspired dancing. Anchors away, don't miss this joyful cruise.

*Penny-Lynn Cookson is an arts and culture historian, writer and lecturer living in Niagara-on-the-Lake.*

# Music Niagara opens 28th season with young classical artists

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

A rainy Sunday afternoon provided an unlikely backdrop for Antonio Vivaldi's "Spring," as Music Niagara opened its 28th summer festival at Ironwood Cider House with a concert featuring emerging Canadian musicians and the festival debut of mezzo-soprano Liepa Spaukas.

The Vivaldi & Virtuosos concert opened the 20-concert summer festival that runs from June to August, and launched its Young Virtuoso series, featuring young performers at the start of their career.

The 4 p.m. concert ran indoors at Ironwood Cider House rather than the planned outdoor tent due to the weather.

Music Niagara's artistic director, Atis Bankas, built the program around young performers and Vivaldi, and used the breaks between pieces during the



Music Niagara artistic director Atis Bankas performs alongside young violinists from the Taylor Academy and the Glenn Gould School at the Royal Conservatory of Music during Sunday's Vivaldi & Virtuosos concert at Ironwood Cider House. The performance opened Music Niagara's 28th summer festival and its Young Virtuoso series. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

concert to walk the audience through the music.

"There are not that many concertos for three violins in all of instrumental history," Bankas said. "That's why I love it."

Spaukas made her Music Niagara festival debut last Sunday, previously singing at Roy Thomson Hall, Meridian Hall and Carnegie Hall, and now prepares to

begin a bachelor of music in voice performance at the University of Toronto.

Four violinists from the Taylor Academy and the Glenn Gould School at the Royal Conservatory of Music joined her: Sophia Chen, Dongyu Yao, Elisha Ruo and Iris Zhang.

The CamerAtis Ensemble, a string quintet featuring Bankas, per-

formed alongside the young musicians. Bankas has led Music Niagara for nearly three decades.

Bankas compared Vivaldi's sound to the way a painter works with light and colour. "It's like musical light," he said. "For a painter, everything comes from the paint, the brush and the colours. Vivaldi works the same way with music."

Bankas knew a whole concert of one composer risked sounding the same. He told the crowd the pieces share Vivaldi's style but each stands on its own, and pointed out that one work echoed the famous "Spring" concerto (from the Italian composer's famous "The Four Seasons" group of concerti), while still going its own way.

The concert opened Music Niagara's Young Virtuoso series, which continues July 12 with Lithuania's boys' choir Dagilėlis and Aug. 3 with the Toronto All-Star Big Band's 30th-anniversary performance.

Supporting young artists remains a priority for the festival, Bankas said.

"These concerts are offered at just \$19 as accessibility remains very important to us."

Bankas said this year's festival was shaped in part by audience feedback and a desire to offer music that brings people together.

"In a world that has felt heavy with uncertainty, this season offers something uplifting, music that brings lightness, joy and connection."

Music Niagara's season continues June 21 at St. Mark's Church with pianist and visual artist Victor Paukstelis.

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Legion Branch 124 Niagara-on-the-Lake

# \$15K boost sends 47 kids to art camp

Staff  
The Lake Report

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre has secured a little more than \$15,000 for its Healing Arts for Kids program, allowing dozens of children to attend the centre's summer art camp free of charge and letting the centre buy new equipment and supplies for the camp.

The arts centre announced support from the Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake, Wise Guys Charity Fund, Niagara Community Foundation and the Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society.

The Healing Arts for Kids program is a no-cost, in-studio summer art camp aimed at children who might not otherwise have the opportunity to attend camp. Local schools and community organizations nominate participants for the program.

The Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre said contributions of \$8,750 from the Rotary Club of Niagara-on-the-Lake, \$2,000 through Niagara Community Foundation's Summer Camp



The Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club presents a cheque for \$8,750 to Healing Arts for Kids. From left are Rima Boles, director of the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre; Helle Brodie, chair of community service for the NOTL Rotary Club; Natalie Early, chair of the arts centre board; and Jeannie Manning of the NOTL Rotary Club. SUPPLIED

Grant and \$1,000 from the Niagara-on-the-Lake Horticultural Society will allow 47 children to attend the camp at no cost.

Wise Guys Charity Fund, a St. Catharines-based volunteer-run organization that donates funds to causes across the region, also donated \$4,000 to purchase studio equipment and supplies for the program.

"We are deeply grateful to our community partners for recognizing the importance of arts access and creative expression for children," said Rima Boles,

director of the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre. "Art can provide comfort, confidence, and connection, particularly for young people navigating challenges. This support allows us to offer meaningful programming that is both accessible and impactful."

"Supporting kids who wouldn't normally be able to attend camp is an important part of our commitment to the community," said Helle Brodie, Niagara-on-the-Lake Rotary Club's chair of community service. "Healing Arts for Kids

provides young people with a creative outlet that encourages confidence, connection, and emotional well-being, and we are proud to support its impact through the Niagara Pumphouse Arts Centre."


"Wise Guys Charity Fund exists to support organizations that make a real difference in our community," said Doug Smith, chair of Wise Guys Charity Fund.

Bryan Rose, executive director of the Niagara Community Foundation, said the organization is happy to support efforts that "strengthen the health and vitality" of places like NOTL.


"Healing Arts for Kids demonstrates how arts programming can create meaningful opportunities for children to express themselves, build resilience, and feel supported," he said.

The president of the Horticultural Society, Wendy Cadman, noted it appreciates the support of TASC Tulip Farm, which provided it with the tulip bulbs it sold at its bulb sale on June 2 — the organization used those funds to support the children's art program.

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# Shaw Guild opens eight private gardens

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

Will Conlon sat in full sun beside a koi pond at the Royal Manor Inn on Ricardo Street, racing the clock to capture one view of a private Niagara-on-the-Lake garden onto canvas before the gates closed.

“No one put me here. Nobody made me do this,” he said. “I just do whatever I have to do to get the shot, like a journalist doing what they have to do to get the story.”

The Shaw Guild opened eight private gardens across Old Town and Queenston on June 13, marking 20 years of its longest-running fundraiser for the Shaw Festival.

The guild is a volunteer group that raises money for the theatre company. Ticket sales from the tour help pay for Shaw productions, including “A Christmas Carol,” and for children’s programs.

Visitors toured the gardens on their own from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. A homeowner



Visitors explore one of eight private gardens featured in the Shaw Guild’s 20th annual Garden Tour on June 13, while artist Will Conlon, left, captures the scene on canvas. Funds support the Shaw Festival. DAVE VAN DE LAAR

and a master gardener were present at each property to walk guests through the plantings and the history of the trees.

The biggest draw this year, and a new feature of the tour, was the McArthur Estate, a 10-acre property on John Street built in 1823. The guild sold separate timed-entry tickets for the estate and treated it as the

centrepiece of the anniversary tour.

The McFarland House on the Niagara Parkway, one of the seven main tour homes and a military hospital during the War of 1812, offered guests a pre-ordered lunch or cream tea overlooking the Niagara Parks.

Valerie Hancock, who chaired this year’s tour, said it gives visitors a rare look

past the garden gates.

“You get to go to the backside of the homes and to see what’s actually happening in the spaces that we don’t often see from the roadway,” she said.

The band By Design played the patio at the McArthur Estate, one of several gardens with live music performances throughout the day.

The guild also assigned a painter to each garden, giving each one until June 22 to hand back a finished canvas. Conlon drew the Royal Manor Inn, where he built his picture around the koi pond and set an empty bench at the edge of the frame.

“I like having an empty bench in a photo like this because it’s almost like an invitation to come and enjoy this,” he said.

With half an hour left, Conlon stopped painting and shot reference photos to finish the canvas at home.

[andrew@niagaranow.com](mailto:andrew@niagaranow.com)



The solstice evening will include yoga sessions. FILE

# Summer solstice celebration is June 21

Staff  
The Lake Report

Summer officially begins June 21, the longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere.

That evening, Niagara-on-the-Lake residents will gather at Ryerson Park to watch the sun set and welcome the season’s arrival.

The public is invited to join Niagara Nature Tours for Drumming Down the Sun & Yoga in the Park, an annual event celebrating its 10th year.

Organizer Loretta Pietrobon has marked the summer solstice in NOTL since 2014.

“It’s a way to bring people in the community together

and acknowledge the role nature, in all its grandeur, plays in our lives every day,” she said.

Pietrobon said watching the sun sink below the horizon never gets old.

“It’s breathtaking,” she said. “You get a real sense of the grandeur of the lake, the sky, the breeze and how everything comes together.”

The celebration begins at 7 p.m. with yoga led by Rianna Reid, followed by drumming with handpan musician Jeff Seed through sunset.

Participants are encouraged to bring drums, rattles, tambourines or other instruments, along with chairs or blankets.

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**The Lake Report**

# Second-hand bookstore in Virgil supports seasonal farmworkers

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

A new used bookstore in Virgil is turning readers into donors, with every book, puzzle and game sold helping fund programs for seasonal agricultural workers in Niagara-on-the-Lake, as organizers seek a steadier source of income than grants can provide.

Virgil's Book Nook opened Saturday at Cornerstone Community Church, a volunteer-run shop selling used books, puzzles, games and toys. All proceeds will go to the Farmworker Hub, a Niagara-on-the-Lake group that supports seasonal agricultural workers.

The store opened at the corner of Niagara Stone and Field roads and will run Tuesdays from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Thursdays from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m. and Saturdays from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Brittany Kranz, who co-ordinated the Book Nook, said the Farmworker Hub applies for grants as a



Visitors browse the shelves at Virgil's Book Nook during the used bookstore's opening day on Saturday. Operated by volunteers at Cornerstone Community Church, the shop sells donated books, puzzles, games and toys, with all proceeds supporting the Farmworker Hub and its programs for seasonal agricultural workers. ANDREW HAWLITZKY

nonprofit but cannot predict which ones come through, and that gap forces hard choices between programs.

"We have these ideas, but we don't have the funding behind it," said Kranz. "With this, it is set in stone, so if we know that this is going to do well, we can plan these events,"

The permanent store grew from a one-day book sale last year at Cornerstone Community Church after multiple customers asked when the book sale would be returning. Residents asked for two-day sales, three-day sales and longer hours. Cornerstone offered the space, allowing the

one-day sale to become a permanent shop.

Reliable sales would cover specific costs the hub now scrambles to meet. Workers asked the hub to set up weekly pickup soccer games, which cost \$25 an hour to rent the field.

But steady proceeds would let the hub cover that

bill without asking the community for donations each time, Kranz said.

"We've had a lot of generosity within the community, but we would like to be able to back them ... without always asking for people to donate," she said.

The hub directs workers to local services, caters Jamaican and Mexican gatherings and is planning a World Cup viewing party with the town for July 19.

When a category 5 hurricane slammed Jamaica while some Niagara workers were still in Canada last year, the hub became a drop site for relief, Kranz said.

Farmers turned up to pack boxes, haul supplies and donate the materials to ship aid back to the island.

NOTL's fruit harvest only reaches grocery shelves because seasonal workers pick it, Kranz said, and that debt is why residents should back the hub.

"These are our neighbours. If your neighbour is going through a hard

time, then you're there to support them," she said. "Same for us. We are here to support them."

The Niagara Falls Public Library donated decommissioned furniture while Newark Neighbours and an MCC Thrift store in St. Catharines supplied puzzles, games and books to stock the Book Nook's shelves.

The shop also sells a \$20 annual Nook membership that gives buyers a free book or puzzle during their birthday month and half-price books and puzzles on Toonie Tuesdays. Several shoppers signed up on opening day, and two people asked how to volunteer, Kranz said.

Steven Pitkanen, a volunteer working the cash, said he expects interest to grow as more people find out about the new shop.

"The first day has been very steady and a lot of people are just finding out about it, so we'll see it continue," he said.

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# Rain cancels **cricket match** for first time in 35 years

Andrew Hawlitzky  
The Lake Report

The annual Niagara-on-the-Lake versus Vineland farmworkers cricket match washed out Sunday for the first time in its roughly 35-year history, but the rain couldn't stop the good vibes as Elisha "Prophet" Steele and about 60 others packed into the Hub in Virgil.

The Caribbean Workers Outreach Project shifted the day to the former Cornerstone Community Church building on Sunday afternoon, where the group ate, played dominoes and honoured Steele, the Niagara Clippers coach and former captain who flew from Jamaica just for the match.

Coun. Erwin Wiens presented the 36-year farmworker affectionately known as Prophet with a town certificate and MPP Wayne Gates a provincial plaque, both recognizing his three decades of cricket organizing and farmwork in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

"For me, that was very important," said Steele. "Those people really pick

me up and they care about me, so I have to care about them also."

He stepped back from playing two years ago to open spots for younger players. The Niagara Clippers still hold the cup it won last year, and Sunday would have been his 30th game against Vineland, a rivalry his Clippers have lost only twice in 29 games, with Steele captaining and coaching 27 of them.

"I know Vineland would really like to get back the cup, but for me, it won't be easy," he said. "I'm not a person who's easy to give up the cup."

A normal match runs about three hours at Veterans Memorial Park and closes with dinner around 6 p.m. This year the field never dried enough to start a single game.

Rev. Dave Pritchard, a co-ordinator with Caribbean Workers Outreach Project, called the game around 2:30 p.m. after about 40 people had waited through the rain since 1:30.

"It was just impossible, and when it rains they can't play cricket," said

Pritchard, who has steered the match through wet years before without ever cancelling.

The cancellation cost the group more than \$4,000, about \$3,000 of it on food, plus no revenue from the donations the match usually brings in.

The catered dinner arrived at 4 p.m., two hours ahead of the usual 6 p.m. serving. Volunteers fed the 60 people at the Hub, gave gift bags to the players and drove the nearly 200 remaining meals to farmworkers' homes.

"This would be way less risky if we didn't spend \$3,000 on food, but we know that it's one of the things that tells the community we're doing important work," he said.

Caribbean Workers Outreach Project formed about 35 years ago after a farmworker riding his bike was struck by a car and left in a ditch, a death that exposed how invisible the workers were to their neighbours.

Churches in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Vineland built the group to support them, and it now organizes



MPP Wayne Gates presents provincial honours to Elisha Prophet Steele. DAVE PRITCHARD

Sunday worship gatherings, a 150-player dominoes tournament, funeral aid and the cricket match each May and June.

Steele plans to return next year for the cricket match with the cup still in hand. "I would come back definitely," he said. "I put

a lot into it because it's one of my hobbies not only in Canada also in Jamaica too."

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# Reimer shoots even-par in men's league

Kevin MacLean  
The Lake Report

Rob Reimer's even-par 36 led all competitors in last Thursday's men's league at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Golf Club.

Al Kavanagh was second, one shot behind. Mackenzie Berg and Tim Taylor were top low net finishers, both with 31.

Keith Dexter unleashed the longest drive on #5 and James Grigjanis-Meusel holed the longest putt on #8 for a birdie 3.

Ted Wiens was closest to the pin on #4 and Ken Porter turned the trick on #9.

Wil Neufeld's birdie on #2 and Grigjanis-Meusel's bird on #8 won them each \$55 gross skins. Net skins went to Stephen Jenkins (#1), John Grimstead (#6) and Greg Fedoryn (#9).

Glen Murray shot his second consecutive 1-over 37 in Tuesday's Woofs league to lead all players again.

Bill Daly won low net with a score of 34.5 and



Rob Reimer shot 36 to earn top spot in the NOTL Golf Club's men's league last week. FILE/JANICE WHITE

Alan Robb's birdie 3 on the first hole earned the hidden hole prize.

Kevin Jackson was closest to the pin on #4.

Tracey Peters was the top shooter in Monday's business women's league, finishing with a 6-over score of 42.

But Wendy Edwards was the top prize winner, with the longest drive on #1 and closest to the hole on #4.

Claire Forbes was closest to the 150 marker on #2,

Terry Diver sank the longest putt on #7 and Claire Bryan was closest to the pin in two on #9.

In Tuesday morning's nine-hole women's league, Sue Sherk was tops with 44. Suzanne Watson and Deborah Williams both shot 50 and Julie Smethurst was next with 51.

Smethurst won the low net prize with a score of 29, ahead of Sherk (34) and Carole Matheson and Williams, both at 37.

Marian MacIntyre was closest to the flower on #2 and Catherine Novick closest to the pin in two on #7.

Reigning club champion Louise Robitaille scored 83 to lead the 18-hole women's league on Tuesday. Yolanda Henry was second with 91 and Peters placed third (92).

Peters was low net winner (69), followed by May Chang (72) and Christine Earl (73).

Cathy Murray was closest to the pin on #4 and Robitaille was closest in two on #7.

Marie Ellison had the fewest putts, needing just 28 over 18 holes. Ginny Green was next with 29, one better than Peters (30).

### TOWN TOURNEY

The Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake's 26th annual NOTL Golf Classic Tournament is back on Thursday, Sept. 10 at the Royal Niagara Golf Club.

Sponsorship and registration details are available under community events on the town's website.



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**Contributed by Patty Garriock**  
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 - Willie Nelson

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# Birds over the fort



The Canadian Forces Snowbirds roar over Fort George National Historic Site on Wednesday afternoon following a flypast at Niagara Falls. The nine-jet Royal Canadian Air Force demonstration team passed over Niagara-on-the-Lake as part of a special appearance in the region, drawing attention from residents and visitors alike as the aircraft thundered overhead.  
 MEGAN VANDERLEE

# The beating and the blessing



THE TURNER REPORT

Continued from Front Page

backwards into the ditch. As I struggled up on one hand, he kicked me in the face with such force I briefly blacked out. My eye took a direct hit and immediately stopped working. The blood started.

It was like a movie clip. Gratuitous, unprovoked violence for the sake of hurt and domination.

As I regained my senses, he was about to go further — preparing another kick, despite his conquest. I rolled, staggered to my feet and tried to flee.

A hundred feet away was Mississauga Street, but there were no cars to flag. Dizzy, with my ass totally whipped, my glasses broken

and clutching the messy eyeball, I was shocked to see him pursuing me. Two terrifying blocks later, he turned back.

I learned later Amy had called 911 and told the police to ping my cell. I called Dorothy. She freaked. I called the cops and was told by the dispatcher, "We are going to get you lots of help."

It happened.

Minutes after I got home, there were six sturdy people in the living room, paramedics and officers. Rob the medic and his team hooked me up, did the protocol, pried open my eye and told me about the real potential for a brain bleed.

Luke and Bruno were there from the police. One stayed with me for an hour to get details and a recorded statement. The other started canvassing the street where the attack took place. Later that evening, Luke showed up again with my busted glasses, vowing to call the next day. He did.

A short post on Facebook brought an overwhelming response before the admin

killed comments. But there were leads and information. One person confirmed that the details — car, man, clothes, age, accent — fit his neighbour, who also has a history of assault. He lives two doors from where my assailant beat me.

I told Luke everything. "This is good information," he said. "We're on it."

That night, I called the answering service of Marianne Hopkins, an optometrist on Mary Street, and left a message asking for an appointment. My eye was swollen shut and unresponsive. There was a boot mark on my forehead.

The next morning, Saturday, she called back. Soon I was in her clinic, opened generously for a single patient. The eye was damaged, she concluded. But not pooched. In time, I will see things again. She sent a prescription to Shoppers Drug Mart, which was filled in minutes. When I hobbled in to retrieve it, the pharmacist gave me everything short of a hug.

So here it is. Writing this

with one eye and thinking about life in NOTL. One supporter who called talked about a home invasion that just happened close by — guns, injury and robbery.

"The GTA is coming here," she said. "And nobody knows how to stop it."

Dorothy asked me if we need to leave this place now. "I'm going to worry every time you open that door and walk out," she said, in tears. It's hard to see the one you love hurt.

I thought about Amy, Rob, Luke, the 911 dispatcher, the hundreds of FB comments, the people I barely knew who called, our neighbour Karen who brought fresh scones, Marianne tending to my eye, the drug store empathy, those who hastened to identify the perp and the people on the street I'd never spoken to who approached me with warmth and support.

"We're staying," I said.

Garth Turner is a NOTL resident, journalist, author, wealth manager and former federal MP and minister. garth@garth.ca

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## Severance isn't the issue with Rand Estate

Dear editor,

Your writer from St. Davids, Mr. Peter Rusin, still doesn't seem to get it ("Hotel plan for Rand makes sense for property," The Lake Report, June 11).

By way of correction, clarification and, at the same time, pointing out the obvious mistakes, I would like to make the following comments:

1: The continuing misuse of the phrase NIMBY becomes clear when it is used by a person who is a considerable distance from the site and is probably unaffected by any decisions that are made.

2: The past severance of the property, regardless of the reasoning behind this or the point of view at the time, is not a relevant issue to the current dispute. Property severance has never been an issue in this ongoing conflict.

3: Public access to the Niagara River is also not in any way a relevant issue to the current dispute, nor is a potential future council member (being referred to by your writer).

The present owner is an experienced developer. He knowingly purchased this



A rendering of the latest hotel proposal for the Rand Estate. Opponents of the project argue the development remains too large for the historic riverfront property and fails to adequately protect its heritage attributes or respect the character of the neighbourhood.

iconic property as it exists with its many heritage, entry and other limitations an has every right to development, subject of course to existing zoning and building bylaws.

Nobody, as far as I know, is objecting or disagreeing with this. He does not, however, have the automatic or given right to amendments of the bylaws just to suit his development plans.

In my repeated opinion, SORE (an organization that can claim that many

supporters are situated a considerable distance from the site, and are hardly NIMBYs) is not against development and is simply trying hard to get a proposal by the developer that recognizes and protects the heritage assets at the site and gives future consideration to the surrounding residents and area.

So far this has not been the case, as the Ontario Land Tribunal has determined in its report.

For your writer to make

the comment that people are not allowed occupancy at the remaining Rand property is both incorrect and false, as are those that refer to hypocrisy and again to NIMBYism.

To my knowledge, the latest application is a completely new proposal by the developer for the Rand Estate and does not even consider the property severance that has occurred in the past.

*Derek Collins*  
NOTL

## NOTL thrives because of cultural development

Dear editor:

Living in Niagara-on-the-Lake since 1971 and getting involved in various organizations and causes provides a perspective that those arriving later won't usually be aware of.

History and culture come to mind, as does tourism, with agriculture and economic development comprising a third. Let me start with preserving history and enhancing culture.

When Tom Burroughs and the Shaw board opened the Festival Theatre in 1973, I was running the Niagara Institute as well as being Tom's neighbour and friend. We spoke frequently of the town, its growing attractiveness as well as the meaning of "festival."

We concluded that while Shaw was a centre-piece, there were other community assets that could be employed, expanding the

extent of "festival" further. Performing arts would be one foundation, visual arts a second and music a third.

We also thought of locations and leaders to drive this vision forward. Randwood (which we had combined with the neighbouring Rand family property into a 13-acre parcel), operating as a leadership centre, had an important history and could also become a focus for the visual arts — we displayed, for openers, a collection of 23 paintings, several of them famous, owned by the Ontario Society of Artists.

Music could also be centered there as well as elsewhere, certain churches and schools representing strong possibilities. A gathering place on the Commons might also be cultivated for certain limited outdoor events.

Thus "the festival," wrapped in a blanket of

history and culture, could become a community-wide concept.

Since then, many such developments have occurred in the Old Town and beyond crafting what I like to refer as a "creative common."

The NOTL Museum continues to grow, the Pumphouse was formed and thrives, the Public Library and Community Centre add enormous value, Music Niagara and other significant musical series have taken shape.

Shaw's soon-to-be-opened Artists Centre will provide yet another venue. And several other notable initiatives have also been added to our performing, visual and musical mosaic. Niagara-on-the-Lake might now be considered a "festival."

One missing element that's obvious is the Randwood Estate, being pitched by its developer-owner as

a gated community. An unwanted first, it would become off-limits to all except those who book at the related hotel or buy a neighbouring residence.

Like many others, there is much I oppose in such a development. If it is approved, my lament, in particular, will be the ignorance it represents of an important piece of the town's history, of large estates and the founder-owners who helped shape our past, an amputation from our community's legacy.

There are better (and still profitable) uses of that property that would also celebrate its historic placement among us. Randwood should be available to the public for reasonable access. Hopefully such an outcome will ultimately emerge.

*Terry Mactaggart*  
NOTL



This week's riddle is "Jeopardy!" style  
Category: CLOTHES TIME

**U.S. aircrews in B-17s & B-24s popularized this style of often sheepskin-lined flight jacket in World War II.**

Last issue category: MOTHER'S MILK

Clue: These Asian apes nurse their young for as long as eight or nine years, longer than any other primate.

Answer: What are orangutans?

Answered first by: Tuija Johansson

Also answered correctly (in order) by:  
Jane Morris, Bob Wheatley, Lynda Collet, Sue Rautenberg, Jeff Lake, Emma Balsas, Wesley Mann, Esther VanGorder, Katie Reimer, Marla Percy, Debbi Irving, Claudia Grimwood, Wade Durling, Hedy Wiebe, Sheila Meloche, Donna Pearce

Email answers to [editor@niagaranow.com](mailto:editor@niagaranow.com), with your name, for a chance to win a \$25 Irish Harp Pub gift card every week. (Subject line: Riddle me this)

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# Where is the cap on short-term rentals in NOTL?



**ARCHITEXT**

Brian Marshall  
Columnist

This past Sunday, I attended a small meeting of folks who had deep roots in this town. Some folks were “lifers” — born and raised here with family that reached back generations — while others had only a mere 50 or so years of residency.

Then there was me who, although having been a regular visitor to Niagara since the 1960s, didn’t put full-time “skin in the game” and move to NOTL until 12 years ago. I was a tyro in this mix.

While not one of the folks in that meeting condescended to my comparatively recent relocation into the community, my “come-from-away” origin or lack of boots on the ground knowledge of NOTL’s historic streetscape evolution and when their casual

references to past owners of historic buildings clearly left me somewhat lost. Without judgement, they generously educated me.

What these folks all have in common is something I share: a fundamental commitment to preserve and maintain the unique community and historic built character of Niagara-on-the-Lake.

While the meeting visited several important topics, there was one item which in retrospect I realized this column has not addressed over the last eight years: the “hollowing out” of residential neighbourhoods.

Generally speaking, this phenomenon can be defined as the decline of an area caused by the loss of permanent residents and local-serving businesses resulting in neighbourhoods that may look intact on the surface, but actually lack the economic and social cohesiveness necessary to maintain a healthy and vibrant community.

Although there are several socioeconomic drivers that contribute to “hollowing out” — consider how few of the businesses on Queen Street are primarily oriented to servicing the needs of NOTL’s resident population — this columnist lacks the



Does NOTL have more vacation rentals than a small town needs? Brian Marshall says it’s time for a cull. FILE

space to examine them all.

So, for now, let’s visit the issue of short-term rentals.

Professor David Wachsmuth of McGill University led an ongoing study on the impacts of short-term rentals on Canadian housing that received the 2020 CMHC President’s Medal for Outstanding Housing Research.

This research identified that short-term rentals was one primary causes for the shift, commonly referred to as the “financialization of housing,” toward treating housing as a commodity — a vehicle for wealth generation and investment — rather than a basic right resulting in social benefits.

It also captured the financial incentives of short-term rentals vis-à-vis the impact on housing which lead to long-term rentals being converted into short-term ones.

Amongst other negative fallouts, the short-term rental study findings suggest this trend has resulted in upward pressure on housing prices (purchase and rental) due to a loss of long term residential stock. In fact, the research at that time identified that over 31,000 long-term dwellings in Canada had been lost to the short-term rental market.

Further, that this movement to short-term rental conversion was growing notably faster in small

towns like NOTL than in larger cities.

In 2022, this newspaper reported that over 10 per cent of all homes in Niagara-on-the-Lake’s Old Town were engaged in the short term rental market (“Short-term rentals consume 10 per cent of Old Town homes,” March 17, 2022) and there were 290 licensed short-term rentals across the entire town.

It’s fascinating that, while NOTL has removed the temporary cap (over 10 per cent) for the number of licensed short-term rentals and opened the floodgates, the city of Portland, Maine (population 69,568) was so fundamentally concerned with the ongoing viability of its urban neighbourhoods that its instituted a permanent cap set at 1.5 per cent of the city’s rental stock or 290 short-term rentals units for all of 2024.

Ironic that NOTL, at about a quarter of the population of Portland, should have identical total (2022 vs. 2024) numbers for licensed short-term rentals.

Based on my research (I may serve to be corrected with 2026 numbers), Niagara-on-the-Lake has roughly 840-long term rental units. And, if Portland’s “crisis

point” to preserve neighbourhood viability and character was applied to our town, the short-term rental licences would be virtually non-existent.

That said, I am completely supportive of the historical tradition of cottage rentals in Niagara-on-the-Lake, which has a long and storied history in our town. In fact, the ongoing existence of the Chautauqua neighbourhood is arguably due to over 100 years of vacation rental revenues paid back to the property owners.

So, I cannot argue with a “made in NOTL” solution. However, there must be strict parameters, bylaws and enforcement undertakings applied to the short-term rental theatre.

Make it clear, proscriptive, defined and enforceable. Anything less would be an abrogation of the overwhelming community’s charge to safeguard our town’s character into the future.

Stay tuned next week when we’ll delve into the challenges of preserving community against hollowing out further.

*Brian Marshall is a NOTL realtor, author and expert consultant on architectural design, restoration and heritage.*

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# Constant **conflicts of interest** befuddle me



**ROSS'S RAMBLINGS**

Ross Robinson  
Columnist



Our locally elected officials do what they can to benefit the majority of people — only in a few cases are they acting maliciously, says Ross Robinson. But get out and vote.

Constant conflict-of-interest situations befuddle me

At the risk of confirming my confusion around the many conflict-of-interest situations in the news lately, I will ramble into a subject area that is admittedly fairly foreign to me.

At all levels of government, it seems more and more elected officials are declaring conflicts of interest, often “out of an abundance of caution.”

But isn't there an inherent tension here?

In our democratic system, we elect people to represent us at the municipal, regional, provincial and national levels. We encourage people to get involved, to bring their experience and expertise to public service.

As my wise mother from Cochrane would often say,

“If you don't get involved, you have exactly no right to complain.”

That life lesson has encouraged me to participate in controversial issues from time to time. Another lesson learned long ago was, “What is popular is not always right, and what is right is not always popular.”

It takes courage to go against the majority, to row against the current and to vote against the mob. Often, it is years before true wisdom is understood and acknowledged.

For a great and educational, almost life-altering book, read Profiles in Courage by John F. Kennedy.

Written in 1956, it tells the stories of people who were ridiculed for their positions but later proven right.

During election campaigns, voters consider many factors: candidates' backgrounds, experience, education, platform promises and, sometimes, simply their vibe.

Many candidates bring expertise from particular fields. And this is often where conflict-of-interest issues arise.

Recently, a Toronto councillor declared a conflict because his spouse was a high school teacher and council was discussing the location of a new school. Last year,

a respected farmer near Welland declared a conflict regarding a proposed irrigation project because it could directly benefit his land.

I understand the reasoning. But I also find it puzzling.

How do we balance avoiding conflicts of interest with making use of the knowledge and experience elected officials bring to the table? The very people best equipped to understand an issue are often the ones who step away from the discussion.

Just when we could all benefit from their expertise, they raise a hand and declare a conflict.

It's getting late and I am on deadline, so let me wrap this Ross's Ramblings up.

I think we are fortunate to have strong democratic institutions in Canada. In the vast majority of cases, our elected representatives do their best to make decisions that benefit the greatest number of people. Only rarely is there even a hint of malfeasance.

Take a moment to thank a politician. Local elections are only a few months away.

Be sure to exercise your right to vote in this great town. Be thankful you are a Canadian. And a NOTLER.

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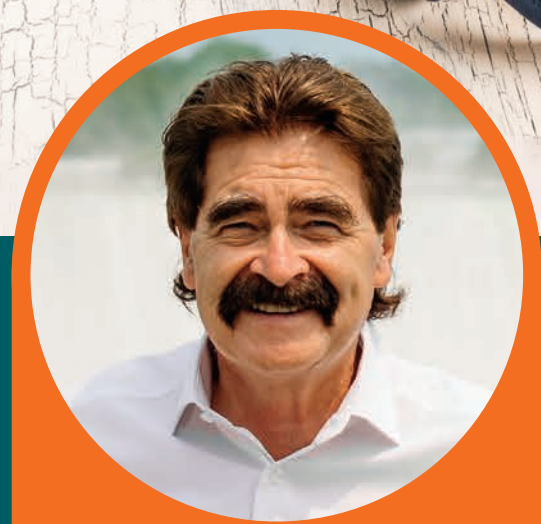
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# Have some fun



**Across**

- 1. Disreputable (6)
- 5. Fraught with danger (8)
- 9. Like most lunch breaks (4-4)
- 10. Longtime Zimbabwean leader (6)
- 11. Sticky snares (4)
- 12. Sparsely distributed amount (10)
- 13. She saw deserts ranged below (10)
- 17. Imperial field measure (4)
- 18. In the proper manner (4)
- 19. Group who stick it to the ball (6,4)
- 20. Grandstanders (10)
- 24. Eliot's were practical (4)
- 26. Landing places (6)
- 27. Develops and utilizes (8)
- 28. Character sketches (8)
- 29. Raised the roof (6)

**Down**

- 2. Residence (5)
- 3. Sheers off (5,4)
- 4. Often bought with emulsion (5)
- 5. Communicator before texts and smartphones (5)
- 6. Recall past experiences (9)
- 7. Within the rules (5)
- 8. Inner city, perhaps (5,4)
- 14. Like Gabriel, for example (9)
- 15. Dry run (9)
- 16. And so on (3)
- 17. Scholar to sort out where to learn to paint (3,6)
- 21. Bluff (5)
- 22. Bakers? (5)
- 23. Mawkish (5)
- 25. Right of ownership (5)

## Crossword Puzzle

1	2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
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11					12									
13	14				15		16					17		
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26							27							
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Last issue's answers

1	O	B	S	T	A	C	L	E	S	6	U	S	A	G	E		
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		1					
4			5	7		1	
	6	3	2	9			8



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**EXPLORING HISTORY**  
WITH NOTL MUSEUM



## 1934 Camp Niagara soccer champs

Before there were professional leagues and stadiums packed with FIFA World Cup fans, football (or soccer, as it is known in North America) was a popular game in the military, used to build physical fitness, encourage teamwork and boost morale. It should come as no surprise, then, that the sport was played in Niagara-on-the-Lake by soldiers training here during the First World War and beyond. During the war, the YMCA sponsored a variety of sporting events, including football matches. Rivalries between battalions at Camp Niagara could be intense. In 1916, the 134th Battalion defeated the 169th Battalion in a much-anticipated match. Following their victory, members of the 134th paraded through the 169th's camp, accompanied by a brass band, enthusiastically celebrating their triumph at the expense of their rivals. Fortunately for the defeated 169th, the victorious 134th was shipped off to Camp Borden the very next day, bringing the celebrations to an abrupt end. Football continued to be played at Camp Niagara after the war, and in 1934, D Company of the Royal Canadian Regiment was proclaimed champion of that summer's competition. As Canada welcomes the world's attention during the 2026 FIFA World Cup, the cycle of victory and defeat will once again play out in full force — joy for some, heartbreak for others and celebrations that may occasionally be a little louder than strictly necessary.

## We're shaped by choices, but **not choice alone**



**DR. BROWN**

Dr. William Brown  
Columnist

C. S. Lewis, the author of the Chronicles of Narnia series, suggested that we are the product of the choices we make in life. We all make mistakes in our choices from time to time, but Lewis and others since, suggest that the aggregate of our choices in life, whether for good or ill, shape who we become.

One example of which was picked up by brother David Vryhof in one of his homilies. Vryhof is an episcopal monk in the Society for St. John the Evangelist in Boston. He and his fellow monks counsel visitors to the monastery, students attending nearby universities, community members, prisoners, the ill and others with a variety of needs.

To illustrate the cumulative effect of bad or good decisions, Vryhof recounted the Biblical story of the wayward son, who brought up in a home of wealth and privilege, was eager to strike out on his own and asked his father for his inheritance to take with him. His father, worried about what might happen to such an impulsive inexperienced young man, nonetheless granted his son's wish to make his own choices, despite reservations. What followed were a

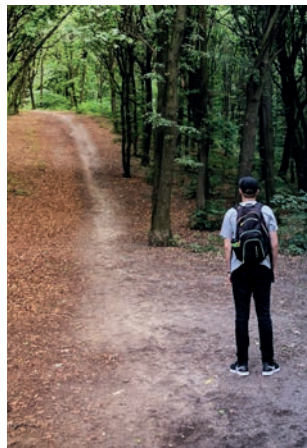
series of bad choices by the son who squandered his inheritance by wasting it on a lavish style of anything goes and like-minded companions, only too happy to help him waste his money. The result over a long series of bad choices was that eventually he lost everything including his fly-by-night friends and eventually was reduced to working in a pigsty for pittance, if that.

Eventually he came to his senses and began to make better decisions: the most important was to return home, whatever penalties he might pay in rank, influence and recompense. To his surprise, his father spotted him far off, ran to him with open arms, embraced and loved him, and lavished new clothes, shoes and a ring on him.

What made matters far worse for the older brother who stayed home and toed the line, was that his father threw a great party to celebrate his younger son's return. Not surprisingly, the stay-at-home son's nose was out of joint with indignant jealousy. Why wasn't his brother punished for his stupidity and wilfulness?

The lesson Vryhof drove home is that we get in to trouble through a series of bad choices and we get out of trouble by beginning to make better choices. Which makes sense but isn't the whole story, is it?

Many choices we make are not choices we are free to make. That's the case in infancy, and early childhood when our brains soak up language, behavioral and cultural norms from their family and in later years from peers, teachers and other influence-makers,



The paths we choose may not be as much our choice as we like to think.

who shape the opinions and mindsets of children, often for a lifetime, and whose choices are made in the context of those acquired biases and influences.

Imagine for a moment what must be happening in trouble spots like Israel, the Gaza strip, Lebanon, Ukraine and Sudan these days to the young brought up in the midst of terror, loss or wounding of family and community members, the survivors of which children will be poisoned for life against those who caused the death or wounding of those dearest to them.

Past conflicts create and feed future conflicts in a vicious cycle of blame for wrongs in the past. That's been the history of Europe, and certainly the Middle East for millennia. And look where we're at now. Future conflicts are breeding now because of what happened in the past and continues in the present and will be bitterly remembered in the future. The human flaw is that as a species we are intensely tribalistic.

Witness the opposition to those of differing colour, race, ethnicity and culture.

What else explains border crises, racial violence and the rise of the far-right in the politics of much of Europe, the U.S. and so many other places in the world where those perceived as different are seen as foreign, "not us," and hence kept at border's length or if within borders, may be subjected to continued prejudice and violence?

Humans possess brains capable of solving the greatest mysteries in the universe and our own evolutionary history yet fail time and time again to solve the pernicious problem posed by tribalism.

Tribalism may have worked in small early groups distant from other groups but fails when it comes to regional or national groups with differing stories, histories, beliefs and cultures, especially when they compete for scarce resources and power.

To return to Vryhof, while it's probably true that we sometimes get in and out of trouble by a series of incremental bad or good choices, the tilt of those choices is often shaped by what was impressed on us by the cultures and beliefs to which we were exposed when we were young, and which together with accrued experiences, continue to shape our day-to-day choices — for better or worse.

In that sense, freedom of choice, as suggested by Carlo Rovelli and Edward O. Wilson, is an illusion.

Dr. William Brown is a professor of neurology at McMaster University and co-founder of the InfoHealth series at the Niagara-on-the-Lake Public Library.

## Obituary

### Miriam Mott



MOTT, Miriam Dolores (nee Smith) —  
Dec. 10, 1937 – June 11, 2026

With deep sadness, we announce the passing of Miriam Mott, on Thursday, June 11, 2026, at the Greater Niagara General Hospital after struggling with dementia. She was 88.

Born in St. Catharines, Miriam was predeceased by her husband, Philip (1991), her parents, Robert and Vera Smith (nee Ettles), and her brother, Gary (Penny) Smith. She will be greatly missed and remembered by her daughter Jennifer (partner Paul), and grandchildren Jacob and Isaac, as well as her sister-in-law, cousins, nieces and nephews, and extended family.

Miriam had a distinguished career teaching primary grades within the District School Board of Niagara often recognized and stopped by former students fondly sharing classroom memories long after her retirement. A home body at heart Miriam pursued her love of gardening and wildlife watching nestled on her acreage in Niagara-on-the-Lake. She actively studied Scripture surrounded by her furry companions and gave every possible moment to teaching and supporting her much loved grandchildren.

Visitation will take place on Friday, June 19 from 10 to 11 a.m. at Hulse & English Funeral Home & Chapel, 75 Church St., St. Catharines followed by the funeral service in the Chapel at 11 a.m. Reception to follow. Interment following the reception at McNab Cemetery in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Donations in lieu of flowers may be made to the Lewy Body Dementia Research Fund through the University of Western Ontario ([canadianlbinfo.ca](http://canadianlbinfo.ca)) or Youth for Christ ([yfcstcatharines.com](http://yfcstcatharines.com))

Online tributes may be made at [hulseandenglish.com](http://hulseandenglish.com).

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# NOTLer named one of Niagara's top business leaders under 40

Zahraa Hmood  
The Lake Report

Life is busier than ever these days in this part of the province, but for Felicia Izaguirre Werner, the hustle and bustle of Niagara is a welcome sign of how much the place she's from has grown.

The Niagara-on-the-Lake resident lived outside the country for 15 years, getting her bachelor's degree at the University of Texas at Austin in the United States, then her MBA at the University of East London in London, U.K., where she would proceed to spend the next decade, working in several leadership roles.

Now, back in Niagara for nearly three years, she said she's come to appreciate how lively the area is. something she took for granted when she was younger.

"I didn't give it much credit before I left," she said. "Seeing the amount of growth and investment that is happening here is really, really exciting."

Werner is also playing her part in its growth. She's working at the University of Niagara Falls Canada

as its executive director of community and alumni engagement, connecting with people outside the university as a representative of it, creating partnerships and helping out graduates.

For her work, she's been recognized this year as one of the region's most prominent business leaders: she was honoured at the Niagara 40 Under Forty Business Achievement Awards in late May, placing on the list of the 40 business leaders under the age of 40 and taking home the Best In Class award, the top prize.

"It's such a big honour to even be mentioned among any of those individuals," she said. "With all of the exciting things that are happening Niagara, all of the young leaders that are starting to come back into Niagara, to be amongst them was a massive honour."

Werner started working at the University of Niagara Falls Canada in early 2024 in her current role. The university is newly established, opening its doors to students in April 2024.

Before that, she spent two and a half years as the head of international recruit-



Felicia Izaguirre Werner poses with her awards after being named Best in Class at the Niagara 40 Under Forty Business Achievement Awards in May. The NOTL resident and executive director of community and alumni engagement at the University of Niagara Falls Canada was recognized for her leadership and contributions to the region's business community. SUPPLIED

ment at the University of East London, where she received her MBA in international finance in 2014. "Working and living

there, I loved it, but all of a sudden, I started missing too many Thanksgivings and some of the smaller holidays," she said. "Ni-

agara pulled me back."

In 2023, she moved back home and, for about half a year, put some distance between herself and her

career, before re-entering the workforce in 2024.

That's when the opportunity to join the University of Niagara Falls Canada landed in her lap.

That summer, she bought a home in Niagara-on-the-Lake, where her grandmother grew up and where her mother lives.

"It's really become one of my homes," she said.

As a resident, she enjoys walking through the downtown core while enjoying a cup of coffee, checking out some of what's happening in town along the way (she noted the Peach Festival in August is one of her favourite yearly events).

She says Niagara, including Niagara-on-the-Lake, is at a point where it's future could look like a multitude of things. To her, being able to share NOTL with tourists while also enjoying it as a resident makes her happy.

"There's a lot of opportunities. I think as long as we keep moving forward, there's always going to be a looking at the balance of things, but really appreciating the town for all that it is."

[zahraa@niagaranow.com](mailto:zahraa@niagaranow.com)

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# OUR TOWN HAS A REAL ESTATE MARKET THAT IS IN A LEAGUE OF ITS OWN

Over the past few months, I've shared a few personal stories in these pages—from realizing it was probably time for a new headshot to the experience of selling my own home here in Niagara-on-the-Lake. Maybe someday I'll share how my son and I attended Game 7 of the World Series last November. There's a lot I could say about that.

This week, however, I thought I'd share my thoughts on the current state of our local real estate market.

From my perspective, Niagara-on-the-Lake remains very much a tale of two markets. Buyers have more choice than they've had in years and are taking their time, yet well-priced, well-presented homes continue to attract strong interest and, in some cases, multiple offers.

Inventory is unquestionably higher than we've seen in recent years. Interestingly, this has also been the busiest spring of my career in terms of completed sales, yet I currently have more listings than I've ever carried at one time. That tells me transactions are happening, but new inventory is entering the market just as quickly.

What I'm seeing is a market that has largely adjusted to reality. The uncertainty that dominated the past few years has given way to a more measured approach from both buyers and sellers. Buyers are no longer waiting for the "perfect" interest rate, and sellers are beginning to understand that pricing based on yesterday's market is rarely a successful strategy in today's environment.

I don't believe we're seeing a broad rebound in prices yet, but I also don't see evidence of a significant further decline. In many segments, prices appear to be stabilizing after the correction we've experienced over the past few years. Buyers have become

more comfortable with today's interest rates and have largely accepted that waiting for dramatically lower rates may not be the winning strategy many once hoped for.

For sellers, pricing remains everything. The days of testing the market with an aspirational price are largely behind us. Homes that hit the market at the right price generate activity quickly, while overpriced listings often sit and become stale.

For buyers, this is arguably the most favourable environment we've seen in years. There is selection, negotiating power, and far less pressure than during the frenzy of 2020 and 2021. Buyers who find the right home and plan to stay for the long term should feel confident acting when the right opportunity presents itself.

Looking ahead, barring any major economic shocks, I expect a relatively balanced market through the remainder of the year. Activity should continue, but success for both buyers and sellers will depend on realistic expectations, proper pricing, and strong local market knowledge.

After nearly 20 years and more than 1,000 homes sold, I've learned that markets change, but Niagara-on-the-Lake doesn't. People still want to live here, retire here, invest here, and raise their families here. That's why, despite the challenges and uncertainty, I remain optimistic about where our market goes from here.

I'm also optimistic about the Maple Leafs this year. I know, I know, some habits are hard to break.

If you'd like a complimentary home evaluation or simply want to discuss the market, give me a call.

*With gratitude,  
Greg Sykes*

**GREG SYKES**

SALESPERSON



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